

LYNCHBURG CITY COUNCIL

Agenda Item Summary

MEETING DATE: **October 8, 2002, Work Session**

AGENDA ITEM NO.: **2**

CONSENT:

REGULAR: **X**

CLOSED SESSION:

ACTION: **X**

INFORMATION:

(Confidential)

ITEM TITLE: **Tenant House at 405 Cabell Street**

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize staff to stabilize the Tenant House at 405 Cabell Street through roof repairs.

SUMMARY: See attached Executive Summary

PRIOR ACTION(S): Physical Development Committee, February 2000

FISCAL IMPACT: \$7,700; funds are identified and available

CONTACT(S): Patrick Haley, 846-1776, ext. 244
Diana Trent, 847-1776, ext. 249

ATTACHMENT(S): Executive Summary
Summary Report: Master Engineer and Designers, P.C.
Poplar Forest Restoration Field Study

REVIEWED BY: lkp

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Tenant House at 405 Cabell Street

In 1980, the City of Lynchburg purchased the property located at 405 Cabell Street for the purpose of operating its crisis intervention/shelter care facility for juveniles involved in the Court system. The property consists of the main house (Crossroads House) and a Tenant House building located immediately to the left. For the past 20 years, Crossroads House has served as a residential facility for juveniles and the Tenant House has remained vacant during this period.

The Tenant House fell prey to storm damage over the years, resulting in the deterioration of the roof. Due to limited funds, the requests for repairs were not completed. The City of Lynchburg inspected the building following the receipt of a citizen complaint. As a result of the inspection, a structural engineering report was completed by Charles Parker of Master Engineers and Designers, P.C. in May 2000.

Master Engineers and Designers, P.C. presented three options to address the issues related to the roof and building deterioration. The three options presented were repair (est. \$31,500.00), restoration (est. \$83,335.00) and demolition (est. \$31,400.00). The attached summary report from Master Engineers and Designers, P.C. describes the work that must be done to return the building to a stable and useable condition (attachment II). In addition, a lower estimate of \$7,700 for roof repair was obtained from a local vendor who specializes in historical building restoration. This matter has been presented to the Physical Development Committee several times regarding the structure issues and costs related to roof repair, restoration and demolition. It was the recommendation of the Physical Development Committee to demolish the building. However, prior to taking that action, it was agreed that the City staff could convene a stakeholders group to explore possible uses for the building.

Following the initial report of findings to the Physical Development Committee, a task force of community stakeholders was established. The task force agreed that prior to any further actions a historical documentation and assessment of the building needed to be completed. The Poplar Forest Restoration Field School completed the study in June 2001 and recommended that the City preserve the building (attachment III). The Tenant House was built around 1850 and most likely used for house servants. The building is considered to be architecturally significant to the neighborhood and would serve to enhance Lynchburg's cultural, social and architectural history. Travis McDonald, Director of Architectural Restoration, recommended that the building be stabilized and kept in a mothballed condition to allow for future restoration.

The Department of Human Services has \$7,700 earmarked in the budget to complete a roof repair. This repair would serve to preserve the Tenant House and allow time to explore options for its future use. The Community Stakeholder Task Force, along with City staff recommended several options for the use of the Tenant House. The programs currently offered in Crossroads House are in need of more space and this building would allow an additional area for Family Group Conferencing, interagency meetings and parent and adolescent group meetings that is handicap accessible. In addition, the building could also be utilized as a rest stop for the D Street bicycle trail, providing benches and a water fountain. Also, this past year, the grounds at 405 Cabell Street were enhanced by the Master Gardener program including the courtyard that is located between Crossroads House and the Tenant House. Should the decision be to restore the building, funding options would be explored to offset local costs.

MASTER ENGINEERS AND DESIGNERS, A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION

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September 16, 2002

Ms. Rachel O'Dwyer Flynn
Director, Community Planning and Development
The City of Lynchburg
P.O. Box 60
Lynchburg, Virginia 24505

Reference: 405 Cabell Street
Lynchburg, Virginia
MEAD Project No. 262-116

Dear Ms. Flynn,

We have reviewed our earlier report written in May 2000, on the building at 405 Cabell Street to summarize the work which must be done to return this building to a structurally stable condition. We have not revisited the site, or looked at the interior of the building therefore, all comments herein are based on our initial visit to the building.

STUCCO Quite a bit of the stucco on the exterior of the building is loose and would have to be removed and replaced. Even more of the stucco may be loose now than when we initially visited the site, due to the vines growing on the building. The backside of the roof had severe deterioration, meaning that the roofing, rafters, and ceiling joists on a good portion of the rear of the building will have to be removed and replaced.

ROOFING
2ND FLOOR Due to the roof leaks, the second floor structure and particularly the structure at the upper landing of the stair connecting the first and second floors is severely rotted and will have to be replaced.

CHIMNEYS All of the chimneys need to be checked. The hearth has fallen through in front of one of the fire places on the second floor.

WALLS There are also large cracks between the interior and exterior walls, indicating that something needs to be done to tie these walls together to provide lateral support for the exterior wall. The floor joists need to be checked where the plaster ceiling has fallen to see if the joists are still sound or whether they have been damaged by the roof leak.

1ST FLOOR There is significant settlement in one area on the first floor. Though the floor itself seems sound, the reason for the settlement should be investigated and repaired.

WINDOWS Other exterior improvements needed include repairing or replacing the windows and determining the reason for the leaning of the chimneys and repairing them, if necessary.

Ms. Rachel O'Dwyer Flynn
The City of Lynchburg
REF: 405 Cabell Street

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* As noted in our earlier report, there is quite a bit of work to be done, however, so long as this work is completed, the structure can be returned to a stable and usable condition.

We trust this letter meets your needs, however, if we can be of further assistance, please let us know.

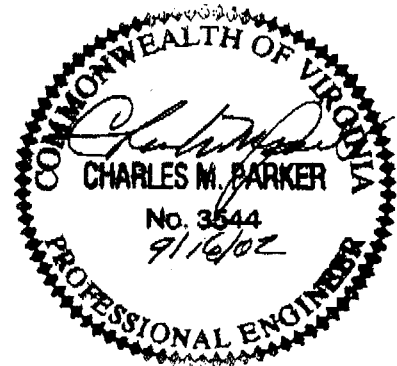
Sincerely,

MASTER ENGINEERS AND DESIGNERS, P.C.



Charles M. Parker, P.E.
Senior Structural Engineer

CMP:mm



Thomas Jefferson's
Poplar Forest

27 June 2001

Mr. Tom Ledford
Director, Lynchburg Museum System
901 Court Street
Lynchburg, VA 24504

Dear Tom,

This is a brief summary of the Poplar Forest Restoration Field School investigation of the Dabney-Scott-Adams dependency building at 405 Cabell Street. A more complete report will be forthcoming.

The building is contemporary with the main house based on our examination of style, structure and materials. All of these features indicate a mid-nineteenth century construction date and match similar features of the main house. The building was constructed in one campaign. In this letter and in the report the principal façade facing Cabell Street is considered the east elevation.

The building's use cannot be definitely assigned except through documentary research, which was beyond the scope of this project. The plan, rooms and fireplaces would indicate a domestic use, most likely for house servants. It is also possible that one or both of the first floor rooms could have been used for other purposes, such as offices for the owner or staff. This non-domestic use is suggested by the fact that the first floor rooms each have two doorways. Both were accessed from the principal east façade entrance and hallway, and from a side entrance. The north room's principal entrance was later closed, leaving only the north doorway (this was most likely done in the late-19th or 20th century when the room became a separate apartment.

The relative high finish for a service building is explained by the fact that dependencies closest to the main house, and especially adjacent to the house and facing the principal approach, are frequently designed with a higher level of finish than other dependencies out-of-sight and further away. The mantels and trim in the building are comparable with the basement level of the main house.

My recommendation is to preserve the building. It is architecturally significant as a contributing part of the Dabney-Scott-Adams House and its neighborhood, especially due to its location and design as a companion building presented to the public. The fact that so many dependencies of early houses in Lynchburg have been lost, due to the prejudice that dependencies have no value, makes this building even more important. Further research might reveal the actual use of the property, enhancing the history and

interpretation of the main house and of Lynchburg's cultural, social and architectural history.

I disagree with many of the subjective "engineer's observations" stated in the Charles Parker report of May 17, 2000, particularly the conclusion that the building should be demolished. Mr. Parker's professional structural assessment of the building is acknowledged, although I find fault with some of his evaluation of structural integrity. While there is obvious damage to the roof structure, stair landing, stair structure, and first floor joists and trim, and masonry, these are small in area compared to the rest of the building and confined to one specific area associated with a hole in the roof. The extent of repairs called for in the engineering report is drastic. For instance, the entire attic roof framing and second floor ceiling joists are sound except for a small area associated with the hole in the roof (approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of the roof; or about 6 joists/rafters on the west side). Rather than replacing the entire west side of the roof framing on the back side of the building, rotted wood pieces can simply be repaired or replaced without wholesale rebuilding. I also disagree that 50-75% of the second floor structure would need to be replaced or that the entire stair needs to be replaced. My opinions are based on a non-occupancy status.

The other reason suggested for demolition, that the parts are plain and therefore not significant, is typical of a narrowly focused and misunderstood viewpoint of architectural and historical values. Mr. Parker's concession that his viewpoint on this subject is not professional confirms the reasons for this disagreement. While I respect Mr. Parker's experience and knowledge, my 30 years in the field of preservation have taught me that architects and engineers trained to work with modern buildings frequently do not value the inherent qualities of traditional construction or vernacular architecture and consequently recommend a non-preservation approach.

To be reasonable, the building does not need restoration work right now, simply stabilization work. To hold the building for any future work it needs: carpentry repairs for a limited roof replacement in open areas; structural shoring for the first story ceiling/second story floor; spot repairs related to structure or weathering; mortar repointing on the exterior to keep out water; minor brick rebuilding (all masonry work with a lime-based mortar); a good drainage system; removal of all vegetation off and away from the building (ivy should be completely dead before it is pulled off the building); and openings need to be secured with plywood coverings (with vents). Spending a smaller sum on emergency stabilization in the near future will keep the building standing for a decade or more, given some periodic attention and maintenance.

I recommend that the City keep this building in a stabilized and mothballed condition. The fact that the roof was allowed to remain open for a number of years has exacerbated the problems common to any buildings of this age. A little routine maintenance will prevent a larger capital outlay for this and other significant buildings owned by the City. The City is responsible for the stewardship of its cultural resources and needs to act with a long-term vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Travis", with a large, stylized initial "T" and a cursive "M" for McDonald.

Travis McDonald

Director of Architectural Restoration